

Dear Committee Members:

My name is Barbara Sloan. I am sorry I am unable to testify before you in person. I appreciate your attention to my comments.

I have multiple disabilities and have required the assistance of the Office of Protection and Advocacy. I needed help to appeal a decision of the Division of Rehabilitation Services not to assist me.

I would not have been able to go forward with an appeal without the support of P & A due to the nature of my disabilities.

I believe strongly that combining P & A with *any* other agency or governmental function would be a huge mistake. Not only would the state risk losing considerable federal monies, but the authority and independence of the organization would be undermined.

The purpose of an Office of Protection and Advocacy is to provide *independent* assistance to individuals without fear of reprisal from another agency. This cannot be accomplished if P & A is not an independent agency.

Further, the Office of Protection and Advocacy has lost many staff positions due to budget cuts already.

From my experience as a member of the Protection and Advocacy for Individuals with Mental Illness (PAIMI) Advisory Council, I know that P & A already struggles to provide the basic services that are mandated. Fortunately, the very dedicated staff are up to this task, but in truth this agency should be gaining positions, rather than being threatened with loss of autonomy.

Thank you for considering my comments.

Sincerely,

Barbara Sloan, M.Ed.  
Wallingford, CT